

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

First Baptist Church - Grove City, Pennsylvania

First Baptist Church is fully committed to the health and well-being of the children and youth entrusted to our care. We clearly and explicitly forbid any kind of child molestation or abuse and require all staff personnel to report any incidents of abuse. First Baptist Church will cooperate fully with authorities in their investigation.

The twofold purpose of this policy is:

1. To **Protect**
 - the ***Rights*** of the children entrusted to our care
 - the ***Integrity*** of our workers
 - the ***Testimony*** of First Baptist Church
2. To **Prevent**
 - ***Negligent Hiring*** by acting responsibly and with due care in the selection of children and youth workers
 - ***Negligent Supervision*** by exercising sufficient care in supervising children and youth workers.

To accomplish these purposes, this policy addresses the screening, supervision, training, and reporting procedures of ***all*** staff (*volunteer and paid*) of ***all*** ministry organizations of First Baptist Church who work with children under 18 years of age.

I. WORKER SCREENING

In order to exercise care in accepting staff to work with our children and youth:

- A. All workers must fill out a *Youth Ministry Worker's Application* form.
- B. A personal interview of each applicant shall be conducted by the senior pastor. The interview shall be held in strict confidence and the application shall be kept in a locked file, accessible only by the pastor. In the absence of a senior pastor, the deacons shall designate an individual to fulfill the senior pastor's responsibilities.
- C. References listed on the application form will be checked.
- D. A "*Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check*" (commonly known as Act 33 Clearance) and a "*Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance*" form must be completed by all applicants. The fee will be paid for by the church.
- E. The deacons shall make the final decision to approve all workers.
- F. Any individual who has been convicted of or has pleaded guilty to either sexual or physical child abuse will not be permitted to work with children or youth but may be considered for service in another area of the church.

II. WORKER SUPERVISION

To assure reasonable care in the supervision of church workers and church activities:

- A. The nursery shall have two approved workers on duty at all times.
- B. Each classroom setting, activity area, or office used for children or youth activities should have unobstructed viewing. In rooms without windows, the door must be left open far enough that activities can be observed.
- C. During any other activity, on or off church property, which involves children or youth, a TWO-ADULT rule will be adopted. That means two adults will be present at each activity.
- D. Supervision of children and youth will be maintained before and after activities until all are in the custody of their parents or a designated adult.
- E. In the event that a worker needs to spend time alone with a child or youth, prior consent must be granted from the child's parent or guardian. Prior notification must also be given to that worker's supervisor. If prior parental consent cannot be obtained, the parents and supervisor must be notified as soon as possible.
- F. Any adult worker who shows inappropriate behavior towards a child/youth should be confronted immediately by an adult witnessing the event, and the incident should be reported to the worker's supervisor. Continued violation is grounds for the termination of the adult worker's services.

III. WORKER TRAINING

Since effective education provides the foundation for an effective prevention program:

- A. All new workers must become familiar with this policy before working with children. They must also be education in the following topics:
 - Child Abuse Definitions
 - Symptoms of Child Abuse
 - What Constitutes Inappropriate Behavior
 - Definition of Mandatory Reporters
 - Civil and Criminal Consequences of Misconduct
- B. All workers are required to attend a training session once a year where this policy and the above topics are reviewed by a member of the pastoral staff or appointed individual in their absence.

IV. WORKER REPORTING PROCEDURES

Since an effective reporting procedure enhances our efforts to protect our children:

A. If Abuse Is Suspected

1. If a worker has reason to suspect a child involved in a church activity has been abused, he/she must report suspicions immediately to his/her supervisor. The supervisor will then report directly to the senior pastor or his designated agent. A doctor or nurse may be consulted for assistance.
2. After proper consultation with the staff and the parents of the child (if they are members of the church) the pastor (or his designated agent) will report the suspected abuse by calling Children & Youth Services of Mercer County at **724-662-2703** (or Childline at **1-800-932-0313** if it is after working hours or on a holiday).
3. Documentation in the form of a written report shall be made by all those involved in the situation and shall include the specifics of all action taken. It shall be kept indefinitely in a confidential and locked file in the church office.
4. In-depth questioning and investigation should be left to the professionals who are familiar with these cases.
5. The deacons/trustees shall be notified immediately of the action taken.

B. If the Alleged Abuser Is a Church Worker

In addition to the above five steps to be taken:

1. The senior pastor shall immediately contact the church's attorney before reporting to state officials.
2. The alleged will immediately be relieved from his/her position of service until an investigation is completed. He/She shall be treated with dignity and will be extended pastoral resources and support.
3. The pastor and a deacon shall notify the parents if they are not already aware of the allegations. Pastoral care and support for the victim and his family will be extended to help heal and prevent further hurt.
4. The senior pastor **only** is designated to speak for the church. Therefore, when approached by the media (i.e., television or newspaper reporter), a church worker should refuse to comment, referring them to the pastor who will issue a statement. If the pastor is inaccessible or involved in the allegation, the deacons shall designate a spokesperson.

Definitions of Child Abuse

Child abuse means serious physical or mental injury which is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental, or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, or serious physical neglect, of a child under 18 years of age, if the injury, abuse or neglect has been caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or by a person responsible for the child's welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of a child's parent....

--PA Child Protective Services Law

Kinds of Abuse

Physical Abuse occurs when a child is harmed bodily resulting in scrapes, bruises, welts, burns, broken bones, etc. The abuser may be a caregiver who is an overly strict disciplinarian or one whose anger is out of control.

Neglect is failing to provide adequately for a child's physical, emotional, and safety needs. For example, a neglected child may have poor hygiene or be badly nourished, improperly clothed, or left unsupervised.

Emotional Abuse is non-physical in nature but still very painful. Emotional deprivation and devaluing a child's worth with critical words or threats are examples of emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse is any sexual activity with a child—behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Symptoms of Sexual Abuse

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

Physical signs may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs may include:

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Shifts in personality—outgoing to withdrawn or vice versa
- Unusually aggressive or withdrawn behavior
- Depression
- Sexual self-consciousness
- *Acting out* of sexual behavior, explicit language, sexual knowledge beyond developmental age
- Pseudo-mature behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities or friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like [*a particular church worker*].
- [*My daddy*] does things to me when we're alone.
- I don't like to be alone with [*a church worker*].
- [*A church worker*] fooled around with me.

Mandated Reporters

Who is required by law to report suspected child abuse?

Any persons who, in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with section 6 when they have reason to believe, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused child.

--Child Protective Services Law, Section 4

Mandated Reporters Include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physician ▪ Coroner ▪ Medical examiner ▪ Nurse ▪ Dentist ▪ Chiropractor ▪ Optometrist ▪ Other medical professional ▪ Mental health professional ▪ Social worker ▪ Public assistance worker ▪ School teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School administrator ▪ School counselor ▪ Child care worker in a day care center ▪ Child care worker in a child caring institution ▪ Day care provider ▪ Alcohol or other drug counselor ▪ Physical therapist ▪ Occupational therapist ▪ Speech therapist ▪ Emergency medical technician ▪ Ambulance attendant ▪ Police officer |
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What about volunteer church workers?

Volunteer workers at First Baptist Church are *not* considered *mandatory reporters* by law. The pastors are considered mandatory reporters only if they *themselves* discover a child who has been abused.

Mandated reporters (as defined by state law) face criminal penalties for not reporting. *Permissive reporters* are permitted to report but they are not legally required to do so. However, it is possible that permissive reporters who do not report reasonable suspicions of abuse will be sued later by victims who allege that their suffering was perpetuated by the failure to report. Therefore, do not automatically dismiss a duty to report on the ground that you are merely a permissive reporter under state law.

Civil & Criminal Consequences of Misconduct

Any worker who is guilty of sexually abusing children will be criminally prosecuted by the state which may result in a prison sentence. They may also be sued in civil court involving themselves and First Baptist Church in a negligence lawsuit involving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Appropriate/Inappropriate Behavior

Guidelines for Workers Who Deal With Children

1. You are not to act as the child's "friend" in a children's friendship manner. You are his or her **teacher**. You must always appropriately maintain your proper respect and authority status and act accordingly. This does not mean that you cannot act "friendly," but it does mean that you at all times act with the respect and dignity which is befitting to your position of ministry.
2. Men in the church should endeavor to *never* touch any child. If found necessary to touch a child, it should always be remembered that the touching will be viewed by the authorities in a very suspicious and/or critical manner.
3. Ladies in the church should endeavor to only touch young children when necessary, and then only from the shoulders up.
4. As much as possible, no person should ever be alone with a child. If at all possible, always have at least two adults present.
5. Children should not be permitted to sit on any worker's lap (*it is understood that nursery care for infants through 3 years of age may necessitate such*).
6. As a general policy, children should not be hugged or kissed by church workers.
7. Children should never stay overnight at a church worker's home unless another adult is present.
8. Church nursery workers who deal with diapers should adhere to the following procedures:
 - Always endeavor to wear gloves.
 - Never apply lotion or powder with your bare hand.
 - A cloth or wipe should always be between you and the child. Under oath, you must be able to testify that you did not inappropriately "touch" the child directly.
9. If possible avoid assisting a non-nursery, older-aged child who has wet or soiled his or her clothes. Endeavor to instruct him or her on how to clean himself or herself without your direct assistance (as frustrating as that may be). You may hand him or her what he or she needs, but do not directly clean or wash the non-nursery, older-aged child.
10. Do everything you can to keep the parents informed about and involved in their child's activities at our church. Remember, the children are the responsibility of their parents. You cannot assume the responsibilities of the parents even if the parents are not treating their children as well as you feel they should.

--Protecting Your Church From Allegations of Child Abuse, Christian Law Assn., pp. 5-7